

Political Communication Report

International Communication Association & American Political Science Association, Vol. 10 No. 2, Spring 2000

In This Issue

This issue of *Political Communication Report* includes an expanded table of contents: a commentary by John McManus, more calls for papers from a wider variety of venues, and a books section that includes a reprint review-essay by Molly Ivins.

COMMENTARY

Consumer Ratings for News?

The addition of the commentary page opens a discussion about remedies for the lack of political knowledge among the electorate in the United States and other countries. Opinions will vary on the policy solution proposed, and you're invited to weigh in with your views. Responses will be published in the next issue of *Political Communication Report*.

News & Notes

Awards

The book review looks at recent titles by MacChesney, Sanford, Sparrow, and Bagdkian. You are also invited to review books for the newsletter. If you would like to write a review, please call or write to make sure the book has not already been assigned. I will be happy to work with publishers to provide you with a complimentary review copy.

Polit.-Psyc. Camp

Calls for Papers

NCA - DC Event

Finally, one gap in this issue is the lack of a major article. David Paletz had planned to write a feature, but the extreme weather on the U.S. east coast intervened. He wrote, "I hope I can extricate myself from the biggest ever snowfall, loss of electricity and telephone."

Book Series

This is the second issue of the joint APSA/ICA Political Communication newsletter to appear in electronic form, and beginning with this issue, *Political Communication Report* is published exclusively on line.

Meetings

IPSA Sessions

Send your comments, reviews, feature articles, and notes about accomplishments, calls for papers, and meeting announcements for inclusion in the next issue by June 15.

Proceedings

[Kevin G. Barnhurst](#), Editor
Political Communication Report (MC-132)
1007 W. Harrison St. Rm. 1140
University of Illinois
Chicago, Ill. 60607
Fax 312.413.3231
E-mail kqbcomm@uic.edu

REVIEW ESSAY

Mauling Media Monopoly

Books Noted

Submissions

Related Links

Commentary

Has the time come for consumer reporting on America's most important commodity?

John McManus

Short-term economic logic is supplanting journalistic thinking in many American newsrooms faster than a sniffle spreads in a daycare. The two sets of rules aren't always at war, but they conflict more than coincide. The collision is nearly head-on in local television and at some web sites, but also threatens to total some newspapers.

What can be done?

In 1994, I examined how markets increasingly shape news (*Market-Driven Journalism: Let the Citizen Beware?*) In that analysis I despaired of "professional" journalists imposing their standards on the newsroom. Having been a reporter, I knew even top editors were just employees. We did as we were told or left.

How about moral suasion? History often exposes the tin ears that the captains of industry turn toward moral crusaders.

Enhanced ethics emphasis in journalism education? Graduates entering the newsroom are in an even weaker position to argue with management than established journalists.

One thing that hadn't been tried was consumer education. With encouragement from folks like Steve Chaffee, Ben Bagdikian, Cliff Christians, Phil Meyer, Ted Glasser and Betty Medsger, I'm attempting an experiment: [Grade the News](http://www.gradethenews.org) seeks to do for news what *Consumer Reports* does for toasters: Make it accountable to the public. As students would say, "Check it out —" (the Web address is www.gradethenews.org).

We hope to create a low-cost model that can be replicated (and improved) in metro areas nationally. (Instead of wringing their hands, journalism professors can influence the environment into which they graduate their students.)

Here's the logic. News is poorly suited for the marketplace because consumers cannot readily evaluate its quality. Beyond simple events like sports scores and highway closures, consumers have to *trust*, first, that reporters get it right, and second, that the news really contains the significant events of the day. "Buying" blind, consumers often are taken advantage of in an un-regulated, self-interested

marketplace. The problem is worst at the local level where the market offers fewer choices.

News that entertains more than it enlightens enriches media owners, but destroys civic capital. It gnaws at democracy's weakest pillar — citizens' limited interest in becoming informed enough to govern themselves wisely.

Our goal is to help citizens find news that empowers them. By directing attention to excellent journalism and exposing shoddy work, we hope to use the market to influence decisions in local newsrooms. San Francisco Bay Area journalists have already expressed the hope that such a site would give them ammunition when they argue for quality with profit-minded managers. Stations or papers consistently ranking at the top of these independent evaluations might gain audience, particularly among the well-educated consumers that advertisers most value.

Will such a project make a difference? Consumer reporting interests large audiences: *Consumer Reports* outsells *Time*, even *Sports Illustrated*. Because the subjects of our coverage are local media "stars" and because our content will be frequently provocative and disturbing, a considerable audience is possible. To generate audience preferences big enough to affect news organizations' bottom lines, however, we may have to coordinate the Web site with vivid monthly television reporting on news ethics aired over local PBS stations. (A project that would combine the interests of television journalism students and students from the critical school?)

Public praise and shame can be powerful motivators of behavior. For example, the state of Missouri recently rated its hospitals for consumers. Within a year, quality indices rose dramatically.

Grade the News has just begun. Your critique, however blunt, would be much appreciated.

Author

A former journalist and journalism professor, [John McManus](#) is now a full-time media researcher living in the San Francisco area. He welcomes your messages via e-mail.

News & Notes

Editor Sought

The *International Journal of Politics, Culture & Society* seeks nominations and self-nominations for the position of Senior Editor (non-salaried) to begin Summer 2000. Send letters and inquiries to [E. Doyle McCarthy](#), Fordham University, Department of Sociology, 441 East Fordham Rd., Bronx, NY 10458.

Orville Lee Receives Award

The article, "Culture & Democratic Theory: Toward a Theory of Symbolic Democracy," in *Constellations* 5.4 (1998), by Orville Lee, Northwestern University, received the Best Article Award from the Sociology of Culture Section, American Sociological Association.

APSA Annual Meeting Papers Online

PROceedings: Political Research Online, is a searchable collection of APSA Annual Meeting papers and abstracts. Papers are made available online prior to each conference and for the year following. The [1999 PROceedings](#) is now available and will remain on-line through August 2000.

Listserve Note

The Political Sociology Section of the American Sociological Association is developing a list-serve. The list will send out announcements and other information related to politics and sociology, including calls for papers, awards, nominations, and so forth. Send [technical requests](#) to be included on the list by e-mail <infoservice@asanet.org>. ASA will refresh the list bimonthly or as needed. For substantive inquiries or comments, contact the [list manager](#) <owner-political_sociology@listserv.asanet.org> or the section representative, [Greg Hooks](#), <ghooks@wsu.edu>.

Awards

Archive Honored

The Political Commercial Archive in the Political Communication Center at the University of Oklahoma has been named an Official Project of Save America's Treasures, a public-private partnership between the White House Millennium Council and the National Trust for Historic Preservation dedicated to the celebration and preservation of irreplaceable national historic and cultural treasures for future generations.

The Julian P. Kanter Political Commercial Archive at the University of Oklahoma serves as a repository for radio and television commercials for political candidates as well as other related political materials. The 66,000 commercials in the archive date back to 1936 for radio and 1950 for television and represent candidates running for offices ranging from U.S. presidency to school boards throughout the United States. The archive also contains commercials by political action committees, advertisements sponsored by corporations and special interest groups on public issues, commercials done for elections in foreign countries, and political debate broadcasts. Lynda Lee Kaid serves as director of the Political Communication Center.

Women's Dissertation Award

The Women's Caucus for Political Science of the American Political Science Association has opened the annual competition for the \$500 Alice Paul Award, given to recognize the best dissertation proposal submitted by a woman graduate student in political science, in the current academic year. Self-nominations are encouraged. An award committee will read and evaluate proposals "blind."

Format

Proposals should be five (single-spaced) to eight (double-spaced) typewritten pages, specifying the research topic and design. Contributions to the field and the literature should be clearly delineated. The nominee's name should not appear in the text of the dissertation proposal, but instead should be provided on a detachable title page, along with institutional affiliation and addresses, telephone, and e-mail for the academic year and summer. Submit six copies of the proposal (under no circumstances can submissions be made electronically).

Chair, Alice Paul Award Committee
University of Utah
Political Science Department
260 South Central Campus Dr., Room 252

Salt Lake City, UT 84112-9152

Deadlines

The deadline for the 1999-2000 competition is April 1, 2000. The award will be announced at the business meeting of the Women's Caucus for Political Science at the 2000 Annual Meeting of the American Political Science Association. It is hoped - but not required - that the recipient will be able to receive the award in person.

Political Psychology Training

Summer Residential Institute

The Summer Institute in Political Psychology (SIPP) will be held from July 9 through August 4, 2000, at the Ohio State University campus in Columbus. SIPP is a four-week intensive training program that introduces graduate students, faculty members, and professionals to the world of political psychology scholarship. Total enrollment is about 55. The Institute is co-sponsored by the International Society of Political Psychology, the Mershon Center, and the Departments of Political Science and Psychology at the Ohio State University. Two resident scholars co-direct: Jon Krosnick and Kathleen McGraw.

Departments of Political Science and Psychology at the Ohio State University. Two resident scholars co-direct: Jon Krosnick and Kathleen McGraw. Guest lecturers include the following:

William von Hippel
Virginia Sapiro
Robert Jervis
David Winter
Donald Sylvan
Richard Herrmann
Philip Tetlock
Paul Sniderman
Thomas Nelson
Richard N. Lebow
Janis Stein
Martha Crenshaw
Jim Sidanius
Marilyn Brewer
Kristin Monroe
Arthur Miller

For information about the program or the application process, call or send a message to [David Bailey](#), Assistant Director, phone (614) 292-9492, fax 614.292.1146. The [SIPP Web site](#) has details. Direct written inquiries to Kathleen McGraw, Summer Institute in Political Psychology, Department of Political Science, The Ohio State University, 2140 Derby Hall, 154 North Oval Mall, Columbus, OH 43210.

Calls for Papers

April 3. *Advances in Life-Course Research: New Frontiers in Socialization*. Manuscripts are being sought for a research annual devoted to the topic of socialization during specific periods of life or across the life course. For submission guidelines, send a message to [Richard Settersten](#), Case Western Reserve University, or [Timothy Owens](#), Indiana University - Indianapolis.

April 15. *Qualitative Inquiry* invites submissions to Vol. 6, Nos. 2 - 4, 2000. Preference is given to manuscripts which are at the cutting edge of qualitative methodology. Send five copies of submission and a \$10.00 processing fee, made out to the University of Illinois, to the editor: [Norman K. Denzin](#), *Qualitative Inquiry*, Department of Sociology, University of Illinois, 326 Lincoln Hall, 702 South Wright Street, Urbana, IL 61801. For more information call Denzin at (217) 333-5225.

May 30. The Third International Meeting of Investigators & Scholars of Communication (ICOM 2000), will meet December 4 - 8 at the University of Havana. Theme: Communication, Information & Society: Tensions Present & Future. Held simultaneously with the International Festival of New Latin-American Film. Submit abstracts for consideration. For information, write to Comité Organizador [ICOM 2000](#), [Facultad de Comunicación](#), Ave. de los Presidentes No. 506, entre 23 y 21, El Vedado. CP.10400, Ciudad de La Habana. CUBA, or send a message by fax, 537.323734.

Journals

Political Power & Social Theory is an annual review committed to advancing interdisciplinary, critical understanding of the links between class relations, political power, and historical development. The journal welcomes empirical and theoretical work and considers papers of substantial length. Send articles to Diane E. Davis, editor, [Political Power & Social Theory](#), Center for Studies of Social Change, 80 Fifth Avenue, 5th Floor, New York, NY 10011. For more information call (212) 229-5312, fax 212.229.5929.

American Politics Quarterly calls for articles on any area of government, from local and state to regional and national, including scholarship on voting behavior, and public opinion. Recent topics have included media, campaigns and elections. Many Political Communication members serve on its editorial board, including James Carlson, Shanto Iyengar, William Jacoby, Kim Fridkin Kahn, Jan Leighley, Jeffery Mondak, Richard Niemi, Lee Sigelman, and B. Dan Wood. The editor is Thomas Holbrook, University of Wisconsin, Milwaukee. For more information, see the [Sage Publications](#) Web page.

NCA Washington Event

Working Papers on Politics & Communication

The NCA 2000 Summer Conference, *Communicating Politics: Engaging the Public in Campaign 2000 and Beyond*, takes place June 21 - 24 at the Hyatt Regency on Capitol Hill in Washington, D.C. It is co-sponsored by National Communication Association, the Carrie Chapman Catt Center for Women and Politics at Iowa State University, and the Political Communication Center at the University of Oklahoma.

The conference is not organized around traditional panels and papers. Instead 125 participants will be invited to submit brief position papers to be distributed in advance, and sessions will be plenary panel discussions, in which a moderator will pose questions based on the papers.

Each plenary sessions will take one of the following themes:

Communicating the Importance of Civic Participation: The Declining American Experience

Communicating Politics Through the Media: What's Wrong and How Can We Fix It?

Communicating Politics through Debates: Enhancing Citizen Involvement

Communicating Candidate Messages with the Public: Political Advertising and the Internet

Communicating Politics Beyond the 2000 Election: Diverse Messages to Diverse Constituencies

The panelists will meet after the plenary sessions to formulate action plans. All action plans will then be summarized and discussed on the last day of the conference and a position paper drafted for general distribution.

Scholars will be joined by practitioners and guest speakers including Janet Brown, executive director of the Commission on Presidential Debates; Julia Cohen, director of Youth Vote 2000; Curtis Gans, director of the Committee for the Study of the American Electorate; Carolyn Jefferson-Jenkins, national president of the League of Women Voters; Nancy Kegan Smith of the National Archives Office of Presidential Libraries, and Ed Goetas, president of the Tarrance Group, a national polling firm. Robert Putnam, of Harvard University, is the invited keynote speaker.

Special Events

The conference opens with an afternoon reception June 21 in the U.S. Capitol, hosted by several members of Congress. Other events include a special program at C-SPAN and an election exhibit at the Newseum in Arlington. The Newseum exhibit, "Every Four Years: Presidential Campaign Coverage, 1896-2000," displays a visual history of American presidential campaigns, with television commercials from the Political Communication Center.

Call for Papers

The deadline for submitting position papers is May 15, 2000. Papers should be 4 - 10 pages in double-spaced typescript, including an abstract of 75-words or less. Submit one hard copy and one electronic copy (on diskette or via e-mail) to [Lynda Lee Kaid](#), Political Communication Center, Department of Communication, University of Oklahoma, 610 Elm Ave., Norman, Ok. 73019.

More information is available from [Sherry Morreale](#), NCA Associate Director, at (703) 750-0533, and on on the [NCA Web site](#).

Book Series

Communication & Participation

Participation is a key component of democratic self-governance. As a concept, it is central in one form or another to all theories of democracy. As a practice, it is the subject of action programs in adult education, community development, and social movements. The series addresses the relationship between participation and communication broadly conceived, in contexts ranging from small group processes, to the effects of computerized communication systems on politics, to the interactions of press and state.

[Tom Jacobson](#)

Dept. of Communication
338 MFAC-Ellicott
State University of New York
Buffalo, NY 14261
Vox (716) 645-2141
Fax 716.645.2086

Political Communication

This series is devoted to any and all aspects of political communication broadly defined to encompass the control, organization, processes, and content of the mass and specialized media as they bear on the political. Thus *political* is also generously defined. It covers power, authority, government, and the processes and content of public policies as they are affected by and influence the media. Nor is *political* limited to government institutions and occupants. It includes the media effect on the socialization, opinions, and political participation of individuals and groups. A diversity of approaches ranging from experimental research to case studies to speculative ruminations are welcome. Above all, books are sought that are innovative, thought-provoking, and original.

[David L. Paletz](#)

214 Perkins Library
Duke University
Durham, NC 27706
Vox (919) 660-4321
Fax 919.660.4330

Meetings

April

London, April 10 - 13. [Political Studies Association](#) of the United Kingdom, 50th Annual Conference.

Copenhagen, April 14 - 19. [European Consortium of Political Research](#) Joint Workshops.

Chicago, April 19 - 23. Midwest Sociological Society. Theme: The Century of the Minority Majority. Send inquiries to [Barbara J. Bank](#), Department of Sociology, University of Missouri, Columbia, MO 65211.

May

La Londe les Maures, France, May 5 - 10. European Worldview: Narratives of European Life. [European Science Foundation](#). Send [e-mail](#) or consult the Web site.

Fredericton, Canada, May 18 - 21. [Qualitatives 2000](#), the 17th annual conference on qualitative analysis, University of New Brunswick and St. Thomas University. Theme: Social Process and Meaning in Ethnography. For information write to [Will C. van den Hoonaard](#), Department of Sociology, P.O.B. 4400, Fredericton, N.B., Canada E3B 5A3, or call (506) 453-4849, fax 506.453.4659.

June

Acapulco, Mexico, June 1 - 5. Annual Conference of the [International Communication Association](#). Theme: ICA: 50 Years of Research in Communication, Culture, and Cognition.

Orono, Maine, June 15 - 17. Public Broadcasting and the Public Interest, University of Maine. For information call (207) 581-1941 or send [e-mail](#).

Washington, D.C., June 22 - 24. [NCA Political Communication Summer Conference](#). Hyatt Regency Hotel. Theme: Communicating Politics: Engaging the Public in Campaign 2000 and Beyond.

July

Seattle, Wash., July 1 - 4. [International Society of Political Psychology](#), Westin Hotel. Theme: Hopes and Fears in the Transition to the New Millennium. The program chair is [Kristen Monroe](#).

Muncie, Ind., July 13 - 15. Communication Technology and Global Culture, Ball State University. Write

to [K. S. Sitaram](#), Department of Radio-Television, Southern Illinois University, Carbondale, IL 62901-6609, call (618) 453-6995, fax 618.453.6982.

Iowa City, July 14 - 15. [NCA Culture Summer Conference](#), University of Iowa. Theme: Communication & Cultural Politics.

Rochester, N.Y., July 20 - 22. Intercultural Communication Academic Conference. Holiday Inn Airport. Theme: Civic Discourse for the third Millennium. Write to [Michael Prosser](#), conference organizer.

August

Phoenix, Ariz., Aug. 9 - 12, 2000. [AEJMC convention](#).

Washington, D.C., Aug. 10 - 11. Culture & Democracy: Acting Locally, Nationally, Globally. Culture Section Mini-conference at George Mason University, Organizer: [Paul Lichterman](#), Department of Sociology, University of Wisconsin-Madison, Madison, WI 53706.

Washington, D.C., Aug. 11 - 13. [American Sociological Association](#), Renaissance Mayflower Hotel.

Curitiba, Brazil, Aug. 23 - 31. [International Conference on Politics & Innovation](#), at the Catholic University of Paraná. Organizer: [Manuel V. Heitor](#), Center for Innovation, Technology & Policy Research, Instituto Superior Técnico.

Washington, D.C., Aug. 31 - Sept. 3. [American Political Science Association](#), 96th Annual Meeting. Theme: Political Science as Discipline? Reconsidering Power, Choice & the State at Century's End.

November

Seattle, Wash., Nov. 8 - 12. [National Communication Association](#), Convention and Trade Center, Sheraton Seattle. Call (701) 750-0533.

Albany, N.Y., Nov. 9 - 11. Northeastern Political Science Association, Crowne Plaza Hotel. Write to the program chair, [Jeffrey Kraus](#), Department of History, Political Science & Economics, Wagner College, 1 Campus Road, Staten Island, NY 10301.

IPSA Sessions & Papers

International Political Science Association

The Research Committee in Political Communication (RC 22) organized the following panels for the upcoming conference. See the Meetings page for details.

22-1 Campaigns and Political Communication

Convenor/Responsible. Philippe J. MAAREK, Université Paris XII Val de Marne (France)

Chair, Bob WORCESTER, Market & Opinion Research International Limited (MORI), (UK)

Papers

Marta LAGOS, Latinobarometro (Chile)

"Political campaigning during the presidential elections in Chile in January 2000"

Denis MONIERE, Université de Montréal (Canada)

"Les cultures politiques sont-elles solubles aux technologies électorales ?"

Vladimir RUKAVISHNIKOV, Institute of Socio-political Research, Russian Academy of Sciences (Russia)

"Elections and political campaigning in Russia in 1990 -2000"

Athanasios N.SAMARAS, University of Sussex (UK) and University of Athens (Greece)

"The decline of partyocracy and the transformation of the Greek political communication system"

Dominic WRING, University of Loughborough (UK)

"Historical evolution of political campaigning"

Supplementary paper. Tatiana BOUROUDJIEVA, University of Sofia (Bulgaria)

"Developpment of the political communication in Bulgaria: electoral campaigns 1989/1999"

Discussant. Philippe J. MAAREK, Université Paris XII Val de Marne (France)

22- 2 Public Government Communication and the Citizen Today: A Comparative Perspective

Convenor/Responsible, Philippe J. MAAREK, Université Paris XII Val de Marne (France)

Chair, Philippe J. MAAREK, Université Paris XII Val de Marne (France)

Papers|

Boguslawa Dobek-Ostrowska, University of Wroclaw (Poland)

"Comparing government communication to the public in Poland and France"

Sabine LANG, Freies Universitat Berlin (Germany)

"Local government and citizen participation in Germany: a study of 'best practice' in public government communication"

Pippa NORRIS, Shorenstein Center on the Press, Politics and Public Policy, John F. Kennedy School of Government, Harvard University (USA)

"Mapping media: concepts, indicators, and evidence"

Barbara PFETSCH, Wissenschaft Zentrum Berlin (Germany)

"Interaction norms in government communication in the United States and Germany"

Thierry VEDEL, CEVIPOF, Fondation Nationale des Sciences Politiques/CNRS (France)

"National policies for public administrations- on line: a comparative analysis"

Discussant, Doris Graber, University of Illinois at Chicago (USA)

SS 3 Roundtable on political communication toward the third millennium / Table-ronde sur le discours politique — propos du troisième millénaire

Joint session between RC22 and the International Association of Media and Communication Research (IAMCR)

Convenor/Responsible, Philippe J. MAAREK, Université Paris XII Val de Marne (France)

Chair, Doris Graber, University of Illinois at Chicago (USA)

Papers/participants

Guy LACHAPELLE, University Concordia, Montreal (Canada)

Sabine LANG, Freies Universität Berlin (Germany)

Philippe J. MAAREK, Université Paris XII Val de Marne (France)

Pippa NORRIS, Shorenstein Center on the Press, Politics and Public Policy, John F. Kennedy School of Government, Harvard University (USA)

Dominic WRING, University of Loughborough (UK)

For further information, write to the chair of IPSA Research Committee in Political Communication, [Philippe J. MAAREK](mailto:Philippe.J.MAAREK@univ-paris12.fr), 41 Rue du Colisee, 75008 Paris, FRANCE, vox 33 - 1 - 42.25.85.82, fax 33.1.43.59.57.03.

Recent Proceedings

Political Economy of the World-System

The twenty-fourth in the series of annual conferences on the topic was held March 24 - 25 at Boston College. Sessions were organized on the theme, "The Modern World-System in the Twentieth Century." For information, write to [Ramon Grosfoguel](#), Sociology Department, McGuinn Hall 426, Boston College, 140 Commonwealth Avenue, Chestnut Hill, MA 02167-3807.

International Communication Association

[ICA 1999 Convention](#), San Francisco, May 27 - 31

American Political Science Association

[APSA 1999 Convention](#), Atlanta, September 1 - 5

[Political Communication Sessions](#)

Association for Education in Journalism & Mass Communication

[AEJMC 1999 Convention](#), New Orleans, August 4 - 7

National Communication Association

[NCA 1999 Convention](#), Chicago, November 4 - 8

International Political Science Association

[ISPP 1999 Scientific Meetings](#), Amsterdam, July 19-21

Reviews

Some Mauling of the Media

Rich Media, Poor Democracy: Communications Politics in Dubious Times

Robert W. McChesney

University of Illinois Press, 1999

427 pages, \$32.95 (cloth). ISBN 0-2520-2448-6

Don't Shoot the Messenger: How Our Growing Hatred of the Media Threatens Free Speech for All of Us

Bruce Sanford

Free Press, 1999

256 pages, \$25 (cloth). ISBN 0-6848-2813-8

Uncertain Guardians: The News Media as a Political Institution

Bartholomew Sparrow

Johns Hopkins University Press, 1999

264 pages, \$48 (cloth), \$17.95 (paper). ISBN 0-8018-6035-0

Media Monopoly, 6th ed.

Ben Haig Bagdikian

Houghton Mifflin, 2000

344 pages, \$17.50 (paper). ISBN 0-8070-6179-4

Oh, goody! A media-bashing day. One of everybody's favorite pastimes.

The only trouble with media bashing, which we all so enjoy, is that it's gotten to be like complaining about the weather: Everyone gripes about the media, but nobody does anything about them.

But good news is at hand: A trio of new books, each written from a different perspective, not only give us some excellent smiting of the usual suspects but also offer some truly helpful suggestions for what we can do about this mess.

I found Robert W. McChesney's *Rich Media, Poor Democracy* the most valuable of three good books because he takes the beast directly by the throat. Rather than moaning about urging journalists to be more responsible or newspapers to try "civic journalism," McChesney has gone to the heart of the matter.

At the end of World War II, 80 percent of American newspapers were independently owned. When Ben

Haig Bagdikian published *Media Monopoly* in 1982, 50 corporations owned almost of all of the major media outlets in the United States. That included 1,787 daily newspapers, 11,000 magazines, 9,000 radio stations, 1,000 television stations, 2,500 book publishers and seven major movie studios. By the time Bagdikian put out the revised edition in 1987, that was down to 29 corporations. And now there are nine. They own it all.

None of this happened because of some inevitable working of the marketplace or any force beyond anyone's control. None of it is written in stone. None of it has to be. Some of the best stuff in McChesney's book is not just how it happened but what the results are in terms of quality as the media have gone from horizontal monopolies, like the old newspaper chains, to vertically integrated, multimedia mega-monopolies like Disney, Time Warner and Viacom.

"In today's corporate media system, journalism — and by that I mean the rigorous accounting of the powers that be and the powers that want to be, as well as wide-ranging coverage of our most urgent social and political issues — has nearly ceased to exist on the air. And has been greatly diminished elsewhere. The reason is simple: good journalism is bad business, and bad journalism can be very, very good for business."

The gory details of how this works out in practice are already legend: O.J., Diana, Jon Benet and Monica, Monica, Monica.

I have often told the story of the time I was on a Son of Sam stakeout with one of Rupert Murdoch's prize Australian imports. Around 3 a.m., I mildly observed that this wasn't my idea of public service. He said impatiently, "Oh, you people from the [New York] *Times* — when are you going to learn? It doesn't matter what kind of swill you set in front of the public. As long as it's got enough sex and violence in it, they'll slurp it up!"

McChesney details how swill sells when a company is able to increase market power by cross-promoting or cross-selling a show — for example, using television to promote a movie and then using the movie to spin off television programs, CDs, books, merchandise and more.

"The striking feature of U.S. media policy-making is how singularly undemocratic it has been — and remains."

McChesney advances a program for reform that liberals and conservatives can support. Conservatives who hate all the cheesy, sleazy sex and violence, and liberals who loathe teledreck and yearn for a sense of community, can make common cause in what could easily become the best use of people power in more than a generation.

McChesney's suggestions, which are well worth more detailed study, are: (1) Shore up nonprofit and noncommercial radio; (2) strengthen public broadcasting; (3) toughen regulation, particularly as regards children's programming, through the FCC; and (4) use the anti-trust laws.

Bruce Sanford's *Don't Shoot the Messenger* may at first appear to be on a different track. Sanford is a distinguished First Amendment lawyer alarmed by the extent to which hatred of the media is affecting

the legal system. Juries are not only awarding huge verdicts, as in the Food Lion decision that was recently overturned, but the media are increasingly reluctant to get near a courtroom and so make private settlements, as with the 'Cincinnati Enquirer' and Chiquita Brands.

Sanford does some outstanding media-bashing himself, but he is more concerned about the damage being done to the First Amendment by the media's loathsome behavior. I particularly commend his books to those in the media. I have long held that we are damaging the First by our behavior, and Sanford's book contains the evidence to prove it.

Bartholomew Sparrow's *Uncertain Guardians* has some fine detail on the media's many transgressions, particularly our gormless performance as the watchdog of democracy (Old Fido asleep again). Among his recommendations, most of them aimed at the media themselves, is one for you.

"One thing individuals can do is to be more self-conscious about their media consumption. Readers and viewers can learn to recognize the stereotypes and stock words and images, story-telling devices, and the news frames being used by journalists. Words such as 'terrorist' and 'extremist' are cases in point, being value-laden terms for actions that, depending on the circumstances, could be called 'heroic' or 'avant-garde' instead."

Just remember, dearly beloved: All the media are rotten, except for the newspaper now in front of your face.

Author

[Molly Ivins](#) is a columnist for the *Star-Telegram*. You can reach her at 1005 Congress Ave., Suite 920, Austin, TX 78701; (512) 476-8908. This article appears courtesy of Molly Ivins, Copyright 1999, all rights reserved.

Books Noted

Aumente, Jerome, Peter Gross, Ray Hiebert, Owen Johnson, and Dean Mills. *Eastern European Journalism: Before, During, and After Communism*. Cresskill, NJ: Hampton Press, 1999. 240 pages, \$21.95 (paper), \$49.50 (cloth).

Calabrese, Andrew, and Jean-Claude Burgelman, eds. *Communication, Citizenship & Social Policy: Rethinking the Limits of the Welfare State*. Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield, 1999. 320 pages, \$22.95 (paper), \$69.00 (cloth). ISBN 0-8476-9107-1

Chaloupka, William. *Everybody Knows: Cynicism in America*. University of Minnesota Press, 1999. 256 pages, \$25.95 (cloth). ISBN 0-8166-3310-X

Coleman, Stephen, ed. *Televised Election Debates. International Perspectives*. New York: St. Martin's Press, 1999. 256 pages, \$65.00 (cloth). ISBN 0-312-22561-X

Critto, Adolfo. *Choosing Models of Society & Social Norms. Improving Choices & Quality of Life*. Lanham, MD: University Press of America, 1999. 368 pages, \$34.50 (paper). ISBN 0-7618-1454-X

Doppelt, Jack C., and Ellen Shearer. *Nonvoters: America's No-Shows*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage, 1999. 254 pages, \$24.95 (paper), \$59.95 (cloth). ISBN 0-7619-1900-3

Frantzich, Stephen E. *Citizen Democracy: Political Activists in a Cynical Age*. Lanham, Md.: Rowman & Littlefield, 1999. 248 pages, \$18.95 (paper), \$65.00 (cloth). ISBN 0-8476-9150-0

Freeman, Jo, and Victoria Johnson, eds. *Waves of Protest: Social Movements Since the Sixties*. Lanham, Md.: Rowman & Littlefield, 1999. 400 pages, \$22.95 (paper), \$69.00 (cloth). ISBN 0-8476-8748-1

Hague, Barry N., and Brian D. Loader. *Digital Democracy: Discourse and Decision Making in the Information Age*. New York: Routledge, 1999. 272 pages, \$22.39 (paper), \$68.00 (cloth).

Hafez, Kai, ed. *Islam and the West in the Mass Media: Fragmented Images in a Globalizing World*. Cresskill, NJ: Hampton Press, 1999. 320 pages, \$26.50 (paper), \$65.00 (cloth).

Harvey, Lisa St. Clair. *Eden Online: Re-inventing Humanity in a Technological Universe*. Cresskill, NJ: Hampton Press, 1999. 288 pages, \$26.50 (paper), \$59.50 (cloth).

Jowett, Garth S., and Victoria O'Donnell. *Propaganda & Persuasion*, 3d. ed. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage, 1999. 448 pages, \$29.95 (paper), \$59.95 (cloth). ISBN 0-7619-1146-2

Kraus, Sidney. *Televised Presidential Debates & Public Policy*. 2d. ed. Mahwah, NJ: Erlbaum, 1999. 336 pages, \$32.50 (paper), \$69.95 (cloth).

McCombs, Maxwell, and Amy Reynolds. *The Poll with a Human Face: The National Issues Convention Experiment in Political Communication*. Mahwah, NJ: Erlbaum, 1999. 272 pages, \$27.50 (paper), \$49.95 (cloth).

Newman, Bruce I. *The Mass Marketing of Politics: Democracy in an Age of Manufactured Images*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage, 1999. 224 pages, \$24.95 (paper), \$56 (cloth). ISBN 0-7619-0958-3

McNair, Brian. *Introduction to Political Communication*. 2d. Ed. New York: Routledge, 1999. 245 pages, \$18.39 (paper), \$60.00 (cloth).

Splichal, Slavko. *Public Opinion: Developments & Controversies in the Twentieth Century*. Lanham, Md.: Rowman & Littlefield, 1999. 350 pages, \$27.95 (paper), \$69.00 (cloth). ISBN 0-8476-9163-4

Sreberny, Annabelle, and Liesbet van Zoonen, eds. *Gender, Politics & Communication*. Cresskill, NJ: Hampton Press, 1999. 368 pages, \$28.50 (paper), \$72.50 (cloth).

Thrall, Trevor A. *War in the Media Age*. Cresskill, NJ: Hampton Press, 1999. 304 pages, \$26.50 (paper), \$59.50 (cloth).

Trager, Robert, and Donna L. Dickerson. *Freedom of Expression in the 21st Century*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Pine Forge Press, 1999. 240 pages, \$24.95 (paper). ISBN 0-8039-9085-5

1998

Alger, Dean. *Megamedia: How Giant Corporations Dominate Mass Media, Distort Competition, and Endanger Democracy*. Lanham, Md.: Rowman & Littlefield, 1998. 256 pages, \$27.95 (cloth). ISBN 0-8476-8389-3

Bourdieu, Pierre. *On Television*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1998. 104 Pages, \$18.95 (paper). ISBN: 1-5658-4407-6

Cloud, Dana L. *Control & Consolation in American Culture & Politics: Rhetorics of Therapy*. Rhetoric & Society Vol. 1. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage, 1998. 192 pages, \$21.95 (paper), \$47.95 (cloth). ISBN 0-7619-0506-5

Cook, Timothy E. *Governing with the News*. Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press, 1998. 264 pages, \$18.00 (paper). ISBN: 0-2261-1500-3

Edles, Laura Desfor. *Symbol and Ritual in the New Spain: The Transition to Democracy after Franco*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998. 197 pages, \$19.95 (paper), \$59.95 (cloth).

Gabriel, John. *Whitewash: Racialized Politics and the Media*. New York: Routledge, 1998. 219 pages.

Gomery, Douglas, ed. *Media in America: The Wilson Quarterly Reader*. Rev. ed. Baltimore: Woodrow Wilson Center Press, 1998. 322 pages, \$17.95 (paper), \$40.00 (cloth). ISBN 0-943875-86-2

Hill, Kevin A., and John E. Hughes. *Cyberpolitics: Citizen Activism in the Age of the Internet*. Lanham, Md.: Rowman & Littlefield, 1998. 224 pages, \$18.95 (paper), \$49.00 (cloth). ISBN 0-8476-8742-2

Slayden, David, and Rita Kirk Whillock. *Soundbite Culture: The Death of Discourse in a Wired World*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage, 1998. 352 pages, \$24.95 (paper), \$55.95 (cloth). ISBN 0-7619-0871-4

Toulouse, Chris, and Timothy W. Luke, eds. *The Politics of Cyberspace*. New York: Routledge, 1998. 208 pages, \$16.79 (paper). ISBN 0-415-92167-8

This issue of *Political Communication Report* includes an expanded table of contents: a commentary by John McManus, more calls for papers from a wider variety of venues, and a books section that includes a reprint review-essay by Molly Ivins.

The addition of the commentary page opens a discussion about remedies for the lack of political knowledge among the electorate in the United States and other countries. Opinions will vary on the policy solution proposed, and you're invited to weigh in with your views. Responses will be published in the next issue of *Political Communication Report*.

The book review looks at recent titles by MacChesney, Sanford, Sparrow, and Bagdkian. You are also invited to review books for the newsletter. If you would like to write a review, please call or write to make sure the book has not already been assigned. I will be happy to work with publishers to provide you with a complimentary review copy.

Finally, one gap in this issue is the lack of a major article. David Paletz had planned to write a feature, but the extreme weather on the U.S. east coast intervened. He wrote, "I hope I can extricate myself from the biggest ever snowfall, loss of electricity and telephone."

This is the second issue of the joint APSA/ICA Political Communication newsletter to appear in electronic form, and beginning with this issue, *Political Communication Report* is published exclusively on line.

Send your comments, reviews, feature articles, and notes about accomplishments, calls for papers, and meeting announcements for inclusion in the next issue by June 15.

[Kevin G. Barnhurst](#), Editor

Political Communication Report (MC-132)

1007 W. Harrison St. Rm. 1140

University of Illinois

Chicago, Ill. 60607

Fax 312.413.3231

E-mail kgbcomm@uic.edu

Related Links

Political Communication Report

Back Issues

[Volume 10.1](#) Autumn 1999

[Volumes 7 - 9](#)

Sponsors

[International Communication Association](#)

[American Political Science Association](#)

[Political Communication Section](#)

Other Organizations

[American Sociological Association](#)

[American Association of Political Consultants](#)